

# Karlos Martínez

Curator: Francisco Ramallo

## *Folded forms*

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at **FORMATOCOMODO**

Risk and passion lie in affection,  
in the shared fear of embracing.  
Leopoldo Alas. *The Possession of Fear*

### Murphy

There's a black-and-white photograph from 1920, author unknown, titled *Cama plegable en la esquina de la calle 40 y la 5ª avenida* (*Folding Bed at the Corner of 40th Street and 5th Avenue*). It captures a glimpse of a small domestic interior. On the left, a wardrobe, like a wide-open mouth, reveals several men's suits hanging on hangers. Contradicting the disharmony of these American interiors (which Edgar Allan Poe refers to in *The Philosophy of Furniture*), a folding bed stands vertically behind the wardrobe, flanked by two curtains that allow the whole setup to be disguised. This is the Murphy Bed, created by William Lawrence Murphy in the 1920s—a bed that could easily be hidden with a simple turn of a knob. The photo hints at a kind of domestic furniture that is both dismissible and transportable, allowing external parts of the house to be transformed into parallel spaces of intimacy.

Similar devices, like the Murphy Bed, had already appeared in films like Charlie Chaplin's *One A.M.* (1916), contributing to the idea of flexible living spaces. This concept was further explored in *The Scarecrow* (released the same year the Murphy Bed was designed), where Buster Keaton and Joe Roberts share a foldable, elastic domestic space. A wall in the film even bears the inscription, "What is a Home without a Mother?"

### Inside and outside

The domestic interior symbolizes a divide between living and working, between home and office, the private and the public, the subjective and the social. This private space becomes an extension of the self, so its privacy is ours, as is the physicality of the space

and all it encompasses. Gaston Bachelard says, "it's in the family room where a dreamer of shelters dreams of the hut, the nest, or the corners where he'd like to crouch like an animal in its lair." Hal Foster identifies sexual desire as another inhabitant of these spaces filled with furniture and mirrors, a legacy from the 19th century, which he describes as tumultuous. He claims these are places of self-discovery, where what is repressed re-emerges like an apparition.

In *Cama plegable en la esquina de la calle 40 y la 5ª avenida* (*Folding Bed at the Corner of 40th Street and 5th Avenue*), the entrance door to the domestic interior shares a strange resemblance to the bed—it almost mirrors its silhouette. The similarity in their dimensions creates a compelling duality, which also appears in another contemporary photograph that advertised such a device. In *Door 11 Rue Larrey Paris*, Marcel Duchamp also reveals an interior space with a door that can be in two different positions. The opening on the right seems to lead into a room, while the one on the left, in shadow, leaves it unclear whether it leads up to an attic or down to a basement. The door's flexibility allows it to fit into either opening. If the ambiguous space is closed off, the room is exposed. If it is blocked, the dark side is revealed.

### Folded Forms (Gray)

In *Folded Forms*, Karlos Martínez explores how we interact with the spaces and objects around us, focusing on the hidden information within spatial camouflage strategies—like those the Murphy Bed brings to small interiors. The artist interprets these as metaphors for human experience, where desires and emotions are continuously reconfigured, and as a means to explore subjectivity and non-normative expressions of sexuality.

Through a meticulously balanced combination of materials, the indecision of

gray, and the reflection of the artist's own body, the exhibition unfolds across several stages, each corresponding to one of the gallery's three sections. Reduced to basic lines and intersections, the *Bed Bases* reflect on the relationship between the materials that compose them, establishing a dialogue between the apparent rigidity of metal and its potential for flexibility. In a dialectic between structure and instability, metal loses the stiffness typically associated with construction and machinery, becoming an agent of change that softens its relationship with the space. Fabric plays another role in this material dialogue. Referencing tailoring work, or the designs of Gunta Stölzl and Anni Albers, the fabric clings to the supporting metal, enhancing its metaphorical potential (hanging from the structure like something drying or mimicking a back). Completing this "static movement" of the pieces, a sort of bed frame acts like ribs, supporting the body—and here, it's exposed, not hidden.

These works are accompanied by *Torn Curtain*, which introduces a new interruption in the wall and offers more possibilities for folding, exploring the malleable relationship between fabric and metal. While acknowledging the earlier works, it also shows a liberation of the textile, now hanging hollow beneath the iron. This tactility drives the piece into a metaphorical realm, once again pointing to a body that is desirous yet contradictory.

### Coda-blind

As an extension of the gray tones that run through the previous sculptural exercises, the final part of the exhibition centers on the textile lexicon introduced earlier. Drawing on tailoring techniques, the weave of the fabric intersects with a hand-stitched herringbone pattern running in the opposite direction. Approaching the fabric reveals a distance from the "perfection" of machine work. Its imperfections, like hand-drawn lines, evoke a poetic grid, reminiscent of the Bauhaus, Agnes Martin, or Marion Baruch. This fabric mosaic, titled *Blind*, not only references the dual function of darkening or illuminating a space (we don't know

whether there's light outside), but it also temporarily shelters the cold ductility of the previous pieces. The work serves as a handle to *Folded Forms*, a parallel home (house-body-object) that explores different states of desire, into which one enters unprotected, like an embrace.

I want a feast of flesh with a frozen spirit,  
The intruder who blinds the windows.  
Let it turn upside down and offer itself,  
Begging for strength in its weakness.  
Leopoldo Alas. *The Possession of Fear*

### 1. TORN CURTAIN #1 (2024)

Painted iron, steel cable, springs, metal fittings, cold wool, canvas, twisted thread, cotton tape, aluminum plate.  
200 x 140 x 100 cm

### 2. BED BASE #2 (2024)

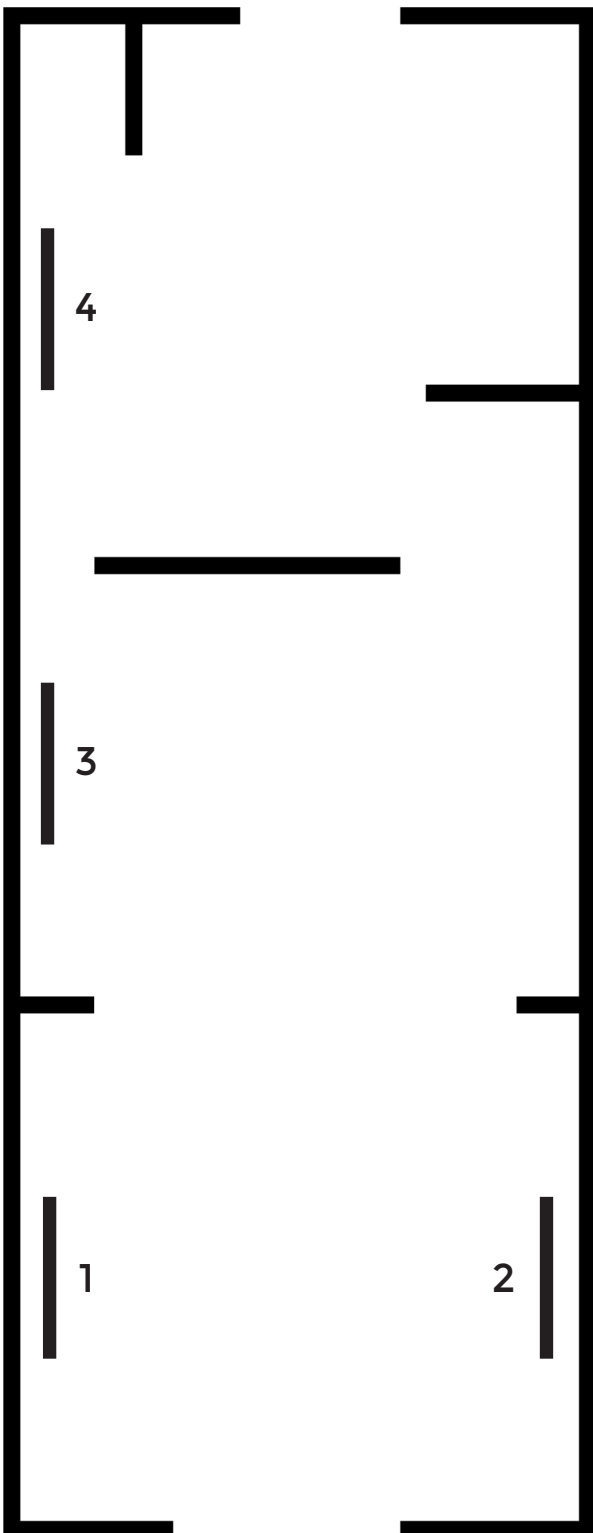
Painted iron, steel cable, springs, fittings, cold wool, canvas, twisted thread, cotton tape, birch veneer, polyester thread.  
240 x 230 x 112 cm

### 3. BED BASE #1 (2024)

Painted iron, steel cable, springs, fittings, cold wool, canvas, twisted thread, cotton tape, birch veneer, polyester thread.  
240 x 79 x 185 cm

### 4. BLIND (2024)

Cold wool, twisted thread, aluminum plate, springs, cotton ribbon, metal fittings.  
214 x 108 x 2 cm



## Short bio

**Karlos Martinez Bordoy** (Bilbao, 1982) lives and works between the Basque Country and Madrid. His speciality is sculptural production with objects in different plastic and visual media. Some of his exhibitions include: FRONTS Okela Kultur Elkartea, Bilbao 2024“Dark Matters” at La Taller Gallery, Bilbao (2024); “Gaps & Corners” at Nadie Nunca Nada No, Madrid (2023); “Black Patterns” at Carreras Múgica, Bilbao (2021), and “Egin Berri” at the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao (2017).

His work has been incorporated into the Collection of the Reina Sofía Museum in Madrid, la Colección Compartida (Shared Collection) of the Museum of Contemporary Art of the Basque Country-Artium Museo, the Museum of Fine Arts in Bilbao and Tabakalera in Donostia-San Sebastián.

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